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ABSTRACT

Human development tasks have become an integral part of many humanistic curriculum models. When such activities are employed in the foreign language classroom, several prominent factors can be indentified: on a psychological (affective) level, integrative and transactional motivation; on a linguistic (cognitive/affective) level, active listening comprehension and creative language use. No concrete psycholinguistic evidence has been established for the effectiveness of the enumerated factors; but support can be found in current psycholinguistic theory and research in their application to second language learning. A psycholinguistic framework accentuates the need to include human development tasks into objective research as well as to make them part of successful foreign language programs. (Author)

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PSYCHOLINGUISTIC FRAMEWORK FOR A HUMANISTIC MODEL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION *

I. Humanistic Curriculum Models

In recent years, educators have realized that cognitive learning processes alone are not sufficient to help a student develop his innate learning potential. In fact, Abraham Maslow explains that extrinsic learning, i.e., learning of the outside, of the impersonal, of arbitrary facts and concepts decided upon and imposed by others, that the learning process in which the teacher is the active person and the student the passive one who gets shaped and taught--that such learning has nothing or very little to do with our students' intrinsic self.[1] Therefore, many educational curriculums have added goals and learning processes in the affective realm to facilitate the students' development of emotional as well as intellectual abilities. Such curriculums consider students' affective needs and concerns, namely the concern with self-image and the desire to relate to others. Further, basic psychological needs of the students are met, i.e., the need for belonging, for self-esteem as well as esteem for others. In short, educational programs which include learning processes

on the affective as well as on the cognitive level enable the student to formulate and answer the following questions: "Who am I? What are my intellectual abilities? What are my feelings? Why do I have such feelings? Who and what will I become?" Such curriculums are named "Humanistic Education", founded upon principles inherent in Humanistic Psychology as defined by Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers. At the focus of the new pedagogical orientation, the student emerges as a human being endowed with an inherent interrelationship of thinking and feeling. As a result, humanistic education emphasizes a symbiotic integration of cognitive and affective learning processes: clearly, this new philosophy accepts that cognitive activity is accompanied by affective activity, that the internalization of cognitive material is essentially affective.[2]

A humanistic curriculum that regards affective goals valuable in their own right, incorporates new teaching and learning techniques. Human development processes, as developed in social psychology, have been adapted to many classroom learning situations. The essential characteristics of such activities are the following:

1) A positive social climate among peers enhances the student's self-esteem and his esteem for others.
2) A setting in the "here and now" brings about students' awareness of own feelings and emotions and those of others.
3) An authentic exchange enables the students to fulfill their needs to communicate ideas and feelings to each other.
4) A reflective attitude encourages students' tolerance for values and cultures different from their own.

Foreign Language Teaching has not lagged behind in accepting the challenges of humanistic education. Frank Grittner's urgent message in 1973 to follow the direction of the new pedagogical philosophy,[3] has been acted upon in many classrooms. A variety of affective learning techniques have become part of Foreign Language learning processes, including the activities of Human Dynamics or Group Dynamics.[4] Basic to group-oriented tasks is the building of trust within the group, creating an atmosphere for open and honest communication. The communication exercises employed in such group activities have the following goals:

1) to enable the student to become aware of himself, his feelings, values and goals
2) to let the student interact with others
3) to facilitate the student's talking in the target language
4) to have the student develop a positive self-concept

Although no systematic, unified, methodological approach has jelled, and the inclusion of humanistic language

learning tasks in the learning process is still each teacher's individually creative contribution, a number of publications form a basic foundation for these activities.[5] Foreign Language educators have become seriously concerned with the learner of the language; a decidedly major change, since historically, the language being taught received primary consideration.

Any new pedagogical orientation, particularly when it runs the risk of becoming a new "bandwagon", receives criticism and objections--the humanistic movement is no exception. These criticisms have been expressed: teachers should not deal with their students' feelings, emotions and/or values; teaching in the affective domain is time-consuming and hard to evaluate; fact- and concept-learning are being neglected, etc. The following might explain the critical judgements: teachers who relegate dealing with emotions to professionals,i.e., therapists, may be expressing their own sense of inadequacy and lack of confidence in their ability to relate to students as human beings; or the "coverage syndrome" is nearly impossible to eradicate. In fact, the new teaching approach requires a different teacher figure, its characteristics finely delineated by Earl Stevick.[6] On the positive side, it is reported

that students will become personally involved when an emotional dimension is added to the cognitive learning. Further, that dealing with students' concerns has increased mastery of Foreign Language skills and that improved language skills enable students to understand themselves better.[7] The German psychologists, E.H. Bottenberg and J.A. Keller, describe their empirical research concerning Maslow's model of human needs[8], while, concurrently, sociologists and psychologists explore the development of the group movement and the group processes as sociological changes occurring in our society. However, an honest appraisal of the current state of humanistic education reveals that affective education, in general, lacks a scientific base,i.e., little research exists to prove or disprove the effectiveness of techniques like the Human or Group Dynamic processes. Nor does such scientific foundation exist for a humanistic Foreign Language program.

II. Prominent Factors of Human Development Tasks

My objective is to point up support, from current psycholinguistic theory and research in first- and second-language acquisition, for several prominent factors of group dynamic tasks in Foreign Language learning. These observations represent an attempt

to provide a psycholinguistic framework for a humanistic model of Foreign Language acquisition. The complexity of such a framework derives from the interpenetration of numerous cognitive and affective levels of learning processes, as well as from the interlinking of linguistic and motivational learning factors. Above all, this framework is neither final nor inclusive. Psycholinguistic theory has been and is in a constant state of flux and changes rapidly with each major new insight. Sufficient knowledge has been gained in the field, however, to make this investigation the cornerstone for further work to include human development tasks into objective research, at the same time providing encouragement to implement or to continue such learning processes in the Foreign Language classes.

III. Motivation

Four prominent factors are under consideration: Integrative and transactional motivation, and active listening comprehension and creative communication. The motivational features clearly belong in the affective domain; the categorization of listening and speaking skills as purely cognitive is historical but not accurate: a close observation of these skills as ac-

tivated in human development tasks establishes an interrelationship between affective and cognitive learning levels.

Motivation is of central importance for learning achievement. A number of studies concerning success in Foreign Learning have confirmed that attitudinal/motivational factors are just as important as Foreign Language learning aptitude or mental ability per se.[9] As a definition of motivation, the 1970 Northeast Conference Report reveals the following:

1) a force or incentive within a person, that person's needs, ideas, organic states, and emotions
2) the process of providing with a motive and motives, the stimulation and maintenance of an active interest in Foreign Language and Foreign Language cultures.10

The basic Psychology definition stating that motivation equals reduction of drives and needs is validated by an observation of participants in human development tasks in general. What occurs in terms of motivation is an evident reduction of the needs to belong to a group of peers and to transact in a meaningful way with these peers. Similar motives emerge from human development activities in Foreign Language classes: once students become involved in the social climate of the successful Foreign Language group--a

very special sub-society due to a special language, special culture, special values, special activities--they develop a strong integrative feeling for such group. The concept of integrative motivation as originally defined by Wallace E. Lambert, to describe the learner's desire to integrate with the target language society[11], appears applicable, on a smaller scale, to the students' strong desire to be part of that specific language class in which feelings and ideas of students are exchanged in a new language. Such integrative motivation that satisfies an individual's wanting to "belong", becomes interlinked with transactional motives,i.e., the individual's need and desire to talk about himself, to discover and share his emotions and ideas, and thereby to create self-esteem, is accomplished by meaningful exchanges between himself and his peers, and between himself and the teacher.

Leon Jakobovits and Barbara Gordon have developed a Transactional Engineering Analysis of Foreign Language Teaching(not to be confused with or related to Transactional Analysis: "I'm Okay--You're Okay").[12] In essence, regarding teacher/student talk in the classroom as a natural communicative setting, they describe "talk actualities",i.e., analyze the actual components

of instructional transactions and attempt to establish transactional norms. The authors do not apply their analysis to humanistic Foreign Language learning tasks, e.g., the human development tasks. However, such talk actuality components can also be defined for these specific group tasks. An entire semantic cluster of feeling exchanges,e.g., could be analyzed for such transactions, as is, in fact, being attempted for group processes in general by William C. Schutz.[13]

The need to communicate successfully is a force that can increase Foreign Language learning. If students are offered the chance for meaningful transactions in their Foreign Language class and given the opportunity to reduce their transactional needs, they are impelled to use linguistic structures and to learn vocabulary. Transactional motivation becomes the impetus to use whatever linguistic means the student possesses or can obtain to establish and talk about his feelings, experiences, ideas and values.

IV. Linguistic Skills

A solid framework for human development tasks must include linguistic factors because Foreign Language educators are convinced that Foreign Language skills have as much value per se as does humanistic

education. This claim is not only justified from the perspective of the innate connection between culture and language, but even more so from the point of view of reducing students' ethnocentricity. The two linguistic skills prominently employed in human development tasks are listening comprehension and creative language use. Both skills have received much attention and discussion in psycholinguistic theory and research in their application to second language learning.

Understanding of the target language often was assumed to be a passive skill. It was taken for granted that somehow a student would develop this ability concurrently with the skill of speaking. Currently, research into language acquisition, specifically the skill of listening comprehension, has merely confirmed what has been known for a long time by teachers who have taken students on trips to the country of the target language: students with excellent communicative abilities frequently encountered great difficulties understanding native speakers. Psycholinguistic research indicates clearly that the listening-comprehension skill is highly complex; that, moreover, the cognitive and affective processes involved in its acquisition are not entirely known nor understood.[14]

Chomsky's original definition of linguistic competence versus linguistic performance has since been modified--yet this differentiation identified the listening skill as an active factor of performance. As part of the linguistic performance, speech perception entails active, analytic as well as decision-making processes.

Terence Quinn and James Wheeler present an excellent minimal set of principles as basis for their listening comprehension "skill-development approach"[15], designed in opposition to the frequently used skill-training approach, which advocates separate skill operations,e.g., the use of phonemic discrimination; a variety of separate operations are expected to lead eventually to the acquisition of the total perception process. In contrast, the Quinn/Wheeler model stresses a different conception of language learning. It is a holistic approach to language acquisition basically founded on the Chomskian view that, although it is not known how a student acquires a second language, a great deal of real, natural language is necessary to activate and facilitate the student's innate learning capacity.[16] A student needs to have as many natural communication situations as possible to acquire the listening and speaking skills.

The speech process mechanism is characterized by active, analytic, cognitive functions, while, at the same time, the mechanism is clearly influenced by student motivation as well as student experience and expectancy. Quinn and Wheeler stress the factor of motivation,i.e., that "students bring far more concentration to a listening exercise when it is listening for a purpose."[17] Human development tasks stress purposive listening, called "reflective" or "active" listening. Essentially, the activities are designed to force the group participant to actively listen and understand what other group members communicate. The listening comprehension is checked out for its correctness by the listener's feedback of his perception of the communicator's message,i.e., the listener practices "reflective listening". In a general communication situation, it is often obvious that each person is more intent on what he will say next rather than pay attention to what his partner is communicating. This facet becomes more pronounced when a student communicates in the target language: even less energy and time are expanded on listening because the student is already synthesizing all of the components of his next statement. "Reflective listening", as practiced consistently in human development tasks, forces the

student to concentrate on his listening comprehension ability. Aside from the important motivational factor of purpose, students bring personal experiences and expectancies into human development tasks as discussed above.

The creative speaking process has been given particular emphasis since Chomsky's concept of generative-transformational grammar has pointed up the connection between the semantic level and the deep structure. If any specific factor were to be singled out to explain the decline of the audio-lingual method, it would have to be the point of natural communication versus drills. D.A. Wilkins suggests that language teaching programs should not be based on a linguistically founded grammatical sequence but rather, on situational features relevant to the communicative needs of the learner among other aspects.[18] James Asher cites research establishing--while exploring children's cognitive development--that meaning and language are not generally experienced separately although they are distinguishable. He suggests as implications for second language learning that possibly the ideal strategy is to acquire the linguistic code as incidental learning to thought processes.[19] If Asher's implications

are expanded to read: to acquire the linguistic code as incidental learning to cognitive and affective processes, the human development tasks provide precisely such language acquisition strategies.

Edward D. Allen lists various human development exercises as classroom techniques to facilitate communicative competence.[20] He supports such tasks as an obvious solution to our now-oriented students' goal for effective immediate communication. Allen does not hesitate to point out that the students' "message" about their feelings and experiences is more important than their grammar and their pronunciation. While teacher tolerance for errors might be the primary consideration for such a situation, it should be kept in mind that young children seemingly have to pass through stages--at times rather prolonged periods--of making errors before the nebulous language acquisition mechanism begins to sort out such errors. Current research in second language error analysis supports an error-making stage for second language acquisition.[21]

Human development tasks are designed to establish effective communication from the very beginning, using the target language as well as gestures and mimicry. From the outset, the target language is the medium

to communicate in a relevant, enjoyable and live manner. Thus, the student perceives the language from the start as a valuable tool to satisfy his transactional needs. The linguistic skills of listening comprehension and creative language use are intricately connected with the affective domain--a strong support for the claim by humanistic educators that cognitive and affective learning cannot be separated; that, in fact, affective learning enhances cognitive learning.

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